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Martin Murphy Middle Schooler Named “San José Teen Idol”

14 year-old Takes Top Prize in San José Public Library’s Second Annual Teen Idol Competition

SAN JOSE, Calif.— Seventeen aspiring “Idols” gathered earlier this month (May 17) at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library to contend in San Jose Public Library’s (SJPL) Second Annual “San José Teen Idol” Grand Finale. Audience and passersby listened as teen finalists passionately belted out lyrics ranging from “Music of the Night” (Phantom of the Opera) to “Part of Your World” (Disney’s Little Mermaid), as well as several of Alicia Keyes’ ballads.

Upon completing their deliberations, the panel of community judges announced that they awarded first place and the title of “2008 San José Teen Idol” to 14-year-old, Demi Rae Moreno, a student at Martin Murphy Middle School.

“I am super excited,” said Moreno. “I didn’t even think I would have won because there were so many talented singers. I thought they were much better than me.”

Moreno, who sang “Open My Heart” by Yolanda Adams, took home \$250 and an offer of free voice lessons sponsored by Deborah Levoy Vocal Studio. AJ Valdez (16) and Kathleen “Megan” Lopez (14) placed second and third, winning \$150 and \$100, respectively.

Over 150 teens competed with each other in the first round of competitions, held in April and early May at all 17 SJPL branches in honor of National Library Week (April 13 – 19). Contestants chose their own music and were allowed to sing in any language. Local judging panels comprised of library staff, teensReach volunteers and others evaluated their performances based on stage presence and vocal abilities.

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“Programs like ‘San José Teen Idol’ are so important to the community,” said Angie Miraflor, a young adult services librarian. “They provide teens with a safe outlet for expression, enabling them to build confidence in their ability to tackle larger challenges.”

Judges this year included public library staff Mary Nacu and Katherine Buckles, San José Youth Commissioner James Hill, III and Francis Howard, SJSU librarian.

“It was very competitive making it really hard to determine who the winner was,” said Howard, “but when we looked at performance and we looked at style and experience, Moreno stood out. We saw a lot of potential in her as far as taking this on as career. She has the heart to go really far.”

Howard is familiar with the show biz industry, having worked for 13 years at Universal Studios Hollywood and sung semi-professionally. He also has a daughter who competed in American Idol and was featured in Rolling Stone magazine.

While the judges conducted their deliberations, the audience was treated to a performance by “The Swing Kids,” second place winners in SJPL’s Teen Tech Week “Battle of the Bands” held earlier this year.

“San José Teen Idol” was originally conceived by a group of youth services librarians at Educational Park Branch Library who wanted to experiment with something new that would bring teens’ singing talent to the community.

National Library Week

First sponsored in 1958, National Library Week is a national observance sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the country each April. It is a time to celebrate the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians and to promote library use and support. All types of libraries - school, public, academic and special - participate.

San José Public Library

San José Public Library system (SJPL) is the largest public library system between San Francisco and Los Angeles on the West Coast in California, serving a culturally diverse population of 989,500 in the nation's 10th largest city. Recipient of the prestigious national Library of the Year award, SJPL is recognized across the country for its innovation and leadership in the field and is one of the busiest library systems nationwide, with an annual checkout rate of more than 14 million items.

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